

A Taste of Torah

Song of Emotions

By Rabbi Moshe Heyman

Mankind has proven, time and again, that it is definitely not an angel. Indeed, we are not angels; we are much higher than angels. The fact that man exists on a physical plane, yet, at the same time, has a spiritual existence as well, makes for a being with tremendous abilities. These are abilities that can be used to do great things; they can also be very destructive. This difference between angels and men is highlighted in a fascinating Gemara that discusses this week's parsha.

The Gemara in Megillah (10b) states: The ministering angels wanted to sing a song of praise at the Red Sea. Hakodosh Boruch Hu, however, exclaimed, "My handiwork is drowning in the sea and you recite a song of praise?"

G-d, in effect, says that the angels have no business singing praise when His creations (although deserving of it) are drowning.

The question that jumps out is that we know that this Shabbos is called Shabbos Shira because the Jews sang praise to Hashem. What kind of double standard is this - the angels are not permitted to sing, but man may? To answer this apparent inconsistency, one of the Telzer Roshei Yeshiva says a

beautiful thought regarding mankind. An angel has only one purpose; whatever its mission is, that is its entire existence and nothing else. A human, on the other hand, has the ability to have different emotions simultaneously. It is inappropriate for an angel to be giving praise while G-d's creations are being destroyed, because an angel is not capable of simultaneously giving praise and feeling the loss. Man, on the other hand, can feel good about something, and at the same time also feel bad. For example, a person can win a game, be excited about winning, and still feel bad for the one who lost. A being of this sort is allowed to sing praise at the Splitting of the Sea. For, in the midst of his praise, there can still be a sense of the loss for the destruction of G-d's creations.

This is of the greatness of man; we can rejoice for one thing and, at the same time, mourn for another. We can have the sensitivity to temper a situation that calls for strong discipline with a touch of mercy. We can celebrate while still making ensuring that our celebration is not at the expense of another. May we all merit to use this unique ability to bring Klal Yisroel together and thus merit the coming of Moshiach.

Ask the Rabbi

A Grain of Salt

Sandra Block from Scottsdale, AZ wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why do we put salt on bread? Is it on all types of bread or just challah? Do we say the hamotzi blessing before eating all

types of bread or only over challah?

Nancy Gomes from Toronto, Ont wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why do we put salt on our challah?

continued on back

Stories For The Soul

Perfectly Wired

The Jews plunged into the Yam Suf (Red Sea) on pure faith and trust in Hashem (G-d). It appeared as though they were marching to a watery grave, but that generation understood with total conviction that Hashem would always do what was good for them - whether or not it seemed to make sense. The following incredible story illustrates this point.

One morning, a woman in the Maalot Dafna neighborhood of Jerusalem was standing on her porch and noticed a guy throwing an attache case in the garbage. She thought to herself, "Oy vey, that guy stole that bag from some Jew here in the neighborhood, and it probably has his tallis or tefillin in it. The poor Jew is now without them, and he must be so worried."

Her brother-in-law was outside fixing his car, and so she said to him, "Go over there and get that bag out. There's probably a tallis and tefillin in there, and some poor Jew has probably lost it."

Without hesitation, he went over and opened up the bag. The bag did not contain a tallis or tefillin; it held a cell phone and a jumble of wires - a bomb! Our hero quickly disconnected the wires, and though the phone rang a few moments later, a near tragedy had been averted.

How did this chareidi (ultra-orthodox) man know that this was a bomb? Even more intriguing, how did he know how to disconnect it without blowing himself up? The answer goes back fifteen years.

Fifteen years earlier, ten chassidim from Meah Shearim suddenly got drafted into the army, despite the fact that they should have been covered by a Religious Exemption. After explaining

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., JAN. 16 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on Jan. 16 at EDOS. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m. with learning following. For information, contact Rabbi Yehuda Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org



CHERRY CREEK MUNCH AND LEARN, MON., JAN. 24

The next Cherry Creek Munch and Learn for men, led by Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, will be held on Mon., Jan. 24, at 12:30 p.m. at Colorado Capital Bank, 55 Madison Ave. The class focuses on Pirkei Avos. For information, contact Rabbi Amsel at 303-820-2855 or at rya@denverkollel.org



'THE PECKING ORDER' AT FEB. 2 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Ed Barad, Shareholder, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, and Kollel Dean Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab for "The Pecking Order: Prioritizing the Distribution of Our Time and Resources" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Feb. 2. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits pending. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Borrowing Without Permission Part V

Another instance where it is permissible to borrow without permission is where the owner regularly allowed a person to borrow the item in the past. Because it is clear that the owner does not object to lending this

object to this individual, this person may borrow it without permission.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

continued from front

Roi Levine Garshoni wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My grandfather, may he rest in peace, would always put salt on the bread in the prayer of hamotzi. What significance is salt to a Jew? Is this the reason Lot's wife was turned to salt?

Dear Sandra Block, Nancy Gomes, and Roi Levine Garshoni,

There are two reasons for dipping bread in salt after saying the blessing on the bread.

One is that people sometimes put salt on their bread to give it flavor. This is a matter of taste, not Jewish law. So, if you are going to dip your bread in salt throughout the meal, you should certainly dip the first piece in salt. This is a way of honoring the blessing, by making sure that the piece of bread you eat after saying the blessing is delicious. This follows the Torah idea that physical pleasure can be used as a vehicle in the service of Hashem.

Another reason why we dip our bread in salt is that when we had the Temple and brought offerings on the altar, salt accompanied every offering. The

significance of salt is that it completes other foods and enhances their taste. Also, it preserves things which would otherwise spoil.

For these two reasons, the Torah tells us to salt our offerings: To offer a completed offering, and to symbolize that our offerings help preserve our relationship with Hashem.

We no longer have the altar to atone for us. Now, our table is our "altar," because we share our food with the needy, and this atones for us. Since our table is like the altar, we try to keep salt on the table all the time. And we dip our bread in salt the entire week, not only on Friday night.

Lot's wife turned into salt because she was stingy towards the needy. Lot himself was a generous person, always inviting guests. His wife resented guests and discouraged them. One trick of hers was to not provide salt, a small thing which makes a big difference to guests. Therefore, she was punished by means of salt, measure for measure.

And to answer Sandra's last question, we say hamotzi on all types of bread, not only on challah.

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Stories for the Soul

continued from front

the issue, nine of the ten were exempted, but one man, the hero of our story, could not receive an exemption. He had to go to the army for six months. Guess

what he learned there? Bomb defusion! Hashem put this exact man at that exact location at that exact moment.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman